

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
 United States Patent and Trademark
 Office
 Box PCT
 Washington, D.C. 20231
 ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE

in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year)

21 September 1999 (21.09.99)

International application No.

PCT/AU99/00079

Applicant's or agent's file reference

40124386

International filing date (day/month/year)

05 February 1999 (05.02.99)

Priority date (day/month/year)

05 February 1998 (05.02.98)

Applicant

BENJAMIN, Dennis, Andrew et al

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:



in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:

02 September 1999 (02.09.99)



in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election ☒ was

was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO
 34, chemin des Colombettes
 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer

C. Carrié

Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

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NOTIFICATION OF THE RECORDING
OF A CHANGE(PCT Rule 92bis.1 and
Administrative Instructions, Section 422)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

FREEHILLS CARTER SMITH & BEADLE
101 Collins Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
AUSTRALIE

Date of mailing (day/month/year)

15 June 2000 (15.06.00)

Applicant's or agent's file reference

40124386

IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION

International application No.

PCT/AU99/00079

International filing date (day/month/year)

05 February 1999 (05.02.99)

1. The following indications appeared on record concerning:

☐

the applicant

☐

the inventor

☒

the agent

☐

the common representative

Name and Address

NOONAN, Greg
Freehills Patent Attorneys
Level 47
101 Collins Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Australia

State of Nationality

State of Residence

Telephone No.

613 9288 1577

Facsimile No.

613 9288 1567

Teleprinter No.

2. The International Bureau hereby notifies the applicant that the following change has been recorded concerning:

☐

the person

☒

the name

☒

the address

☐

the nationality

☐

the residence

Name and Address

FREEHILLS CARTER SMITH & BEADLE
101 Collins Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Australia

State of Nationality

State of Residence

Telephone No.

613 9288 1577

Facsimile No.

613 9288 1567

Teleprinter No.

3. Further observations, if necessary:

4. A copy of this notification has been sent to:

☒

the receiving Office

☐

the International Searching Authority

☐

the International Preliminary Examining Authority

☐

the designated Offices concerned

☒

the elected Offices concerned

☐

other:

The International Bureau of WIPO
34, chemin des Colombettes
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer

Yolaine CUSSAC

Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

5000

09/486648

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

REC'D 27 MARS 2000

WIPO

PCT

09 / 4866487

Applicant's or agent's file reference 40124386	FOR FURTHER ACTION	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416).
International application No. PCT/AU99/00079	International filing date (day/month/year) 5 February 1999	Priority Date (day/month/year) 5 February 1998
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC Int. Cl. ⁷ G06F 17/60 17/30		
Applicant A PTY LTD		

1.	This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.
2.	This REPORT consists of a total of 5 sheets, including this cover sheet. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e., sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT). These annexes consist of a total of 5 sheet(s).
3.	This report contains indications relating to the following items: I <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the report II <input type="checkbox"/> Priority III <input type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability IV <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of invention V <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement VI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certain documents cited VII <input type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international application VIII <input type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 2 September 1999	Date of completion of the report 8 March 2000
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA E-mail address: pct@ipaaustralia.gov.au Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929	Authorized Officer Stephen Lee Telephone No. (02) 6283 2205

I Basis of the report**1. With regard to the elements of the international application:***☐ the international application as originally filed.☒ the description, pages 1-19, as originally filed,
pages , filed with the demand,
pages , received on with the letter of☒ the claims, pages , as originally filed,
pages , as amended (together with any statement) under Article 19,
pages , filed with the demand,
pages 20-24, received on with the letter of 16 November 1999☒ the drawings, pages 1-5, as originally filed,
pages , filed with the demand,
pages , received on with the letter of☐ the sequence listing part of the description:

pages , as originally filed

pages , filed with the demand

pages , received on with the letter of

2. With regard to the language, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language which is:

☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).☐ the language of the translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rules 55.2 and/or 55.3).**3. With regard to any nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence disclosed in the international application, was on the basis of the sequence listing:**☐ contained in the international application in written form.☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished**4. ☐ The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:**☐ the description, pages☐ the claims, Nos.☐ the drawings, sheets/fig.**5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).****

* Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17).

** Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report

IV. Lack of unity of invention

1. In response to the invitation to restrict or pay additional fees the applicant has:
- ☐ restricted the claims.
 - ☐ paid additional fees.
 - ☐ paid additional fees under protest.
 - ☐ neither restricted nor paid additional fees.
2. ☐ This Authority found that the requirement of unity of invention is not complied with and chose, according to Rule 68.1, not to invite the applicant to restrict or pay additional fees.
3. This Authority considers that the requirement of unity of invention in accordance with Rules 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3 is
- ☐ complied with.
 - ☒ not complied with for the following reasons:
 - a) Claims 1-18,25-29 where a database is accessed for the email address.
 - b) Claims 19-24 where numeric characters identify the user in a computer based telecommunication system
4. Consequently, the following parts of the international application were the subject of international preliminary examination in establishing this report:
- ☒ all parts.
 - ☐ the parts relating to claims Nos.

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**1. Statement**

Novelty (N)	Claims 1-29	YES
	Claims	NO
Inventive step (IS)	Claims 1-29	YES
	Claims	NO
Industrial applicability (IA)	Claims 1-29	YES
	Claims	NO

2. Citations and explanations (Rule 70.7)**Novelty and Inventive Step Claims 1-29**

US 5678045
JP 08-097853

Neither of the citations either individually or in obvious combination disclose the invention of the above claims.

VI. Certain documents cited**1. Certain published documents (Rule 70.10)**

Application No. Patent No.	Publication date (day/month/year)	Filing date (day/month/year)	Priority date (valid claim) (day/month/year)
P,X JP 10-083362	31 March 1998	9 September 1996	9 September 1996

2. Non-written disclosures (Rule 70.9)

Kind of non-written disclosure	Date of non-written disclosure (day/month/year)	Date of written disclosure referring to non-written disclosure (day/month/year)
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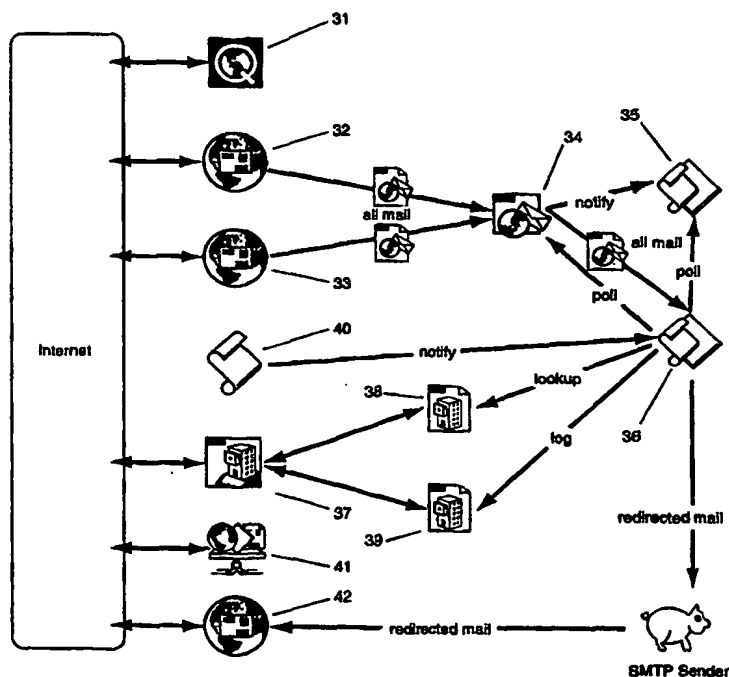
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁶ : G06F 17/60, 17/30		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 99/40527
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(21) International Application Number: PCT/AU99/00079 (22) International Filing Date: 5 February 1999 (05.02.99) (30) Priority Data: PP 1638 5 February 1998 (05.02.98) AU PP 5947 16 September 1998 (16.09.98) AU (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): A PTY. LTD. [AU/AU]; 187 Johnston Street, Fitzroy, VIC 3065 (AU). (72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): BENJAMIN, Dennis, Andrew [AU/AU]; 187 Johnston Street, Fitzroy, VIC 3065 (AU). RODDA, Nicholas, Alan [AU/AU]; 187 Johnston Street, Fitzroy, VIC 3065 (AU). (74) Agents: NOONAN, Greg et al.; Freehills Patent Attorneys, Level 47, 101 Collins Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000 (AU).		(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG). Published With international search report.	

(54) Title: SYSTEM FOR HANDLING ELECTRONIC MAIL

(57) Abstract

A method of conveying an e-mail message including an address field in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended recipient of the message and which may be different from the account name of the intended recipient, including the steps of locating in a database of descriptors and e-mail addresses the e-mail address associated with said descriptor, and transmitting the message to the e-mail address yielded by the database.



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SYSTEM FOR HANDLING ELECTRONIC MAIL

Field of the invention

This invention relates to systems for addressing and conveying electronic mail messages and refers particularly, though not exclusively, to a system which
5 has an easier and more logical determination of email addresses and, further, which is capable of handling and possibly delivering normally undeliverable electronic mail messages.

Definitions

Throughout this specification a reference to the internet is to be taken as
10 including a reference to the world wide web.

Background to the invention

In recent years communication by email has become commonplace. Email, a contraction of the words "electronic mail", refers to systems which allow messages to be sent between sites connected by data links. The most popular
15 email system is based on the internet, a worldwide network of interconnected computer networks. Any user connected to the internet can send email to any other user. Internet users use email-client software which connects them via a telephone line and a modem to a gateway into the internet. The email client sends the message via the internet to a mail server. A mail server is a computer
20 connected to the internet and equipped to receive, store and forward or deliver email messages. If person A wishes to send an email to person B, person A enters the message into his computer, which then sends the message data to a mail server via the internet. Person B then instructs his computer to check whether the mail server has any messages for him, and when such a message is
25 found, the mail server sends the data to his computer, where person B can access it.

The same principles apply to email systems which do not connect to the

internet, for example, many corporations use email within their enterprise, in which case it is transmitted via their intranet.

Email messages are typically structured according to a protocol known as SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) which includes specification of an addressing format that enables email messages to be routed or directly delivered to the correct destination SMTP server. The address forms part of each email's header information. The usual address structure is "accountname@hostname", where "accountname" is the name of the user to whom the email is destined to be delivered; and "hostname" is the name of the host computer where the user has an account. "Hostname" generally comprises a hierarchical series of domain names, separated by periods. For example, "inform.com.au" is the name of the host computer named "inform" in the "com" (commercial) domain within the "au" (Australian) domain.

The "accountname" is typically an arbitrary alpha-numeric string chosen by the user. For example, "the boss@inform.com.au" could be the email address for an individual person at "inform", yet that person might not be named "boss", but could be the boss, or owner, of the business.

As evidenced by the foregoing example, there is not necessarily any obvious correlation between the email address and the name of the actual account holder, as no standards have been established to regularise this aspect of the SMTP protocol. Consequentially, a person wishing to send an email to a person called John Smith at a business known as Informatel, but who does not know his email address, might guess that the address is "john_smith@informatel.com.au; johnsmith@informatel.com.au; or "jsmith@informatel.com.au", or any number of similar permutations.

If the email address is incorrect, it is common practice for the mail server to "bounce" the email - that is, to return it to the sender along with a message explaining the reason the message could not be delivered. The most common reasons for delivery failure are that the "hostname" specified in the address field could not be found, for example because of a spelling error; or that the user

name specified in the address field did not correspond to any user registered with the host specified.

In an effort to provide a means of discovering correct email addresses, numerous directory databases have been established, whereby a person's or corporation's email address can be searched for based on key indicators such as name, address, telephone number, geographical location, and so forth. Such directories have only partly solved the problem of obtaining email addresses as they are not comprehensive. They are also inconvenient to use because the person sending the email must access a directory and search for the desired email address as an extra step in the process of sending an email.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an improved system for addressing and conveying email messages which addresses some of the limitations of the prior-art addressing and conveying schemes, and allows the sender of an email to use certain well-known descriptors of the intended addressee as an alternative to the addressee's actual account and domain names.

A further object of the present invention is to provide an improved system for dealing with undeliverable email messages by attempting to discern the likely correct email address based on the incorrect one supplied.

20 **Summary of the invention**

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of conveying an email message including an address field in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended recipient of the message and which may be different from the account name of the intended recipient, including the steps of locating in a database of descriptors and email addresses the email address associated with said descriptor, and transmitting the message to the email address yielded by the database.

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a

system handling undeliverable electronic mail, including the steps of receiving an email message including an invalid destination address, searching a database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination address and, if a prescribed threshold of match is exceeded, forwarding said email message to a valid email address retrieved from said database according to the result of said search.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving an email message forwarded by a sender, the email message including an invalid destination address, searching a database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination address, and sending a notification message to the sender of said email message, said notification message advising the sender of the results of said database search.

The invention also provides a method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving the email message from its sender, the email message including an address field in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended recipient of the message and which may be different from the account name of the intended recipient, locating in a database of descriptors and email addresses the email address associated with said descriptor, and transmitting the message to the email address yielded by the database.

Preferably, the database includes fields corresponding to commonly-used identifiers such as a telephone number, business name, street address, or personal name.

Preferably, the descriptor is a telephone number associated with the intended recipient. Alternatively, the descriptor may be a business name associated with said intended recipient. Further alternatively, the descriptor may be a personal name associated with said intended recipient.

Furthermore, the descriptor may be a part of a street address associated

with the intended recipient.

The descriptor may also be a combination of one or more identifying elements associated with the intended recipient. For example, the descriptor may comprise a concatenation of a name and city, such as 'johnsmithsydney' or, for
5 greater clarity, 'johnsmith.sydney'. This extension of the inventive concept can be useful for differentiating between several people with the same name. The descriptor may also include a concatenation of name and telephone number, such as johnsmith.61266525689. This, again, is helpful in differentiating between
10 multiple people with the same name, or in cases where there are a number of individual person's email address associated with the one telephone number. It is envisaged that the invention would be arranged so that a great variety of combinations of descriptors can be used in a flexible arrangement. A consequence of this is that the more information included in the descriptor, the less likely for there to be ambiguity or uncertainty.

15 The present invention may provide a method of generating and conveying a return email notification to the sender of the email message, which reports the status of the database search and whether or not the email has been forwarded. Preferably it will also report when the email message has been received and/or read. This may also include notification to the recipient of the email that a
20 message has been received. The notification may include notification by internet, telephone, facsimile, pager or satellite, and may include the forwarding of the email message. The recipient may be able to select or specify if they are to be notified, and/or if the message is to be forwarded. Status messages may include notification of failure to match the descriptor with an email address, reporting of
25 the email address or addresses found, and other status information which may be of interest to the person creating the email message.

The present invention may also provide a method of generating a notification to an unregistered sender and/or recipient of an email message to encourage them to register with the system of the present invention. The
30 notification may include information on the advantages of the system and/or a registration request. Preferably, the notification will be sent to a particular address

no more than a prescribed number of times in a given period.

An advice of the action taken may also be sent to a registered user whose email message (either as sender or receiver) was the cause of the notice to be sent to the unregistered user.

- 5 The invention also includes means for carrying out the method of conveying email messages described in the preceding paragraphs.

Another embodiment of the invention is that especially formatted email messages are interpreted as database queries and not as email messages to be readdressed and forwarded. According to one aspect, for example, a person
10 wishing to ascertain the email address of John Smith can send an email addressed to johnsmith@invention.com with the keyword "find" (for example) as the text of the message, and an email will be returned to the inquirer reporting the results of the search of the database. The johnsmith component may be expressed in different ways,, such as, for example jsmith, smithj, john.smith or
15 john-smith.

In another aspect, the present invention includes a computer equipped with email client software adapted to execute the steps of recognising that an email address of a message being sent does not include a host name, for example by the absence of the @ symbol, and appending a predetermined hostname to the
20 address before sending the email. According to this aspect, use of the email by the sender is beneficially simplified as the sender of the email needs enter only the descriptor information into the email client's address field, after which the email sender adds the host name of the server adapted to perform the steps of the present invention. For example, the email sender enters an address of
25 johnsmith in the address field of the email client and selects "send". The client then appends @invention.com to form the address johnsmith@invention.com, and sends it to that host. The host invention.com then looks up the database, finds that johnsmith is, for example, techsup@megabig.com.nl and forwards the email to that address.

In an alternative form, the terminal or client (the "terminal") of the sender may recognise that the address of the message being sent is not complete and/or correct. It therefore sends a message (by any suitable means, not necessarily email but including email) to the server which then searches the database for the complete/correct email address of the intended recipient. If the complete/correct address is not found, the sender's terminal is advised and the sender can make the appropriate decision as to what to do. If the complete/correct address is found it is forwarded to the sender's terminal which then inserts the correct/complete address in the email message and sends the message to the intended recipient. If more than one possible complete/correct address is found, the sender's terminal is advised and the sender can make the appropriate selection.

The invention also provides a method of determining an email address including providing a database where email addresses are linked with descriptors relevant for a person at each email address so that a user can provide one or more of the descriptors enabling a search to be conducted of the database to determine the relevant email address, the descriptors including at least one of given name, surname, address, domain name, name of business, and/or telephone number(s).

The database may be at the server, or separate. If separate, the server would recognise that the information given in the account name portion of the address was insufficient or not in the correct form for delivery, and therefore pass the necessary message to the operator of the database who would locate the correct or complete address, and forward the message. Alternatively, the operator of the database could pass the correct or complete address back to the server to enable them to send the message.

The invention also includes a database to enable the method to be performed, the database having fields for email addresses, and separate fields for each of, for example, given name, surname, telephone number, domain name, name of business and/or address; at least one of the separate fields being completed for each email address.

The invention also provides an address system to enable users of computer-based telecommunication systems to independently locate an address of a user, the address system including at least one portion which is the numeric characters of a number of a telecommunications device of the user, the at least
5 one portion being that portion which identifies the user. The telephone number may include the area code within the user's country, or may include the country code within the user's country; or may include the personal access number within the user's country.

Preferably, the computer-based telecommunication system is the internet.

10 The device may be a telephone, facsimile, pager, mobile telephone or satellite connected technology.

At least one portion of the descriptor may be alpha numeric; with the alpha optionally including at least a part of a name of the user.

The alpha may precede the numeric, or the numeric may precede the
15 alpha.

The present invention may also include an enquiry facility which will allow the sender of the proposed email to ascertain the details of the recipient's universal messaging contact details. These contact details may include the prospective recipient's street address, telephone number, facsimile number,
20 mobile telephone number, email address, domain name, pager, or satellite connected details or any other email address information he or she chooses to make available.

Description of the drawings

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described by
25 way of non-limitative example only with reference to the accompanying illustrative drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram showing the various functional units of a first embodiment;

Figure 2 is a block diagram showing the various functional units of a second embodiment;

5 Figure 3 is a representation of one example;

Figure 4 is a flow chart for the example of Figure 3; and

Figure 5 is a flow chart for a further embodiment.

Description of preferred embodiments

Referring to Figure 1, sender 1 is a standard email client, complying with
10 SMTP, sending an email intended for delivery to recipient 5. The author of the email using sender 1 composes an email message and sends it to SMTP server 2. When SMTP server 2 attempts to send the message to recipient 5, in the conventional manner, the message will not be deliverable if the address is invalid. For example, the author might have used the address: "john.jones@mega.com"
15 when in fact there is no such user registered with the host: "mega.com". The correct address for John Jones could be: "jjones@mega.com". Alternatively, the author may have omitted the hostname altogether, resulting in an address considered invalid by SMTP server 2.

Having determined that the message is undeliverable, SMTP server 2 then
20 forwards the message to undeliverable email server 3. Undeliverable email server 3 includes a database including records which relate keywords to valid email addresses. Such keywords might include a person's name, business name, telephone number, street address, or any other identifying information that helps identify the person. On receipt of the undeliverable email, undeliverable email
25 server 3 uses substrings of the email address as keywords in an attempt to match a record in database 4.

In this preferred embodiment of the invention, the software is arranged so that if all substrings of the user name part of the email address, delimited by non-alphanumeric characters, match the keywords in full or in part of a database record, the email is forwarded to the email address retrieved from that database
5 record. Continuing the example above where the email was addressed to: "john.jones@mega.com", the database lookup using "john" and "jones" as keywords finds a record for John Jones, including the correct email address, namely: "jjones@mega.com".

If the database lookup is ambiguous, that is there is more than one record
10 including the keywords "john" and "jones", undeliverable email server 3 sends a message back to the author explaining that the original address used was invalid, and reporting the several "john jones" records found, so that the author can select the correct address. When the correct one of several possibilities has been selected, the author completes the address and forwards the email message; or
15 returns the message to undeliverable email server 3 which then forwards it to the desired recipient.

The database lookup function in the embodiment of the invention described in relation to Figure 1 is normally performed at the site of undeliverable email server 3. However, this function could be provided by a database server located
20 elsewhere.

Furthermore, database 4 may well, in practice, not be located at one site but may be distributed over multiple sites. For example, if server 3 receives an email addressed with a descriptor including the word "japan", a database query could be sent to a suitable database server in Japan. Similarly, if undeliverable
25 email server 3 were to receive an email addressed to a phone number starting with, for example, "49", it could either send a query to the telephone number database in Germany, or it could forward the whole message to a suitable server in Germany for further handling.

Referring to Figure 2 where similar components have similar reference
30 numerals with a prefix number 2, email client 21 is a standard email client

complying with SMTP. The author of the email message in this example does not know the address of the person he wishes to send it to, but does know the person's telephone number 6193312345 which, including the country code, 61 in this example, is unique to that person. The author therefore addresses the
5 message to 6193312345@phoneserv.net, phoneserv.net being the host name of the special server of this exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

E-mail client 21 then sends the SMTP message addressed to 6193312345@phoneserv.net to internet 22 via a suitable router. The message is subsequently routed to server 23 which is running on the host called
10 phoneserv.net. Server 23 is adapted to access database 24 which is a database mapping email addresses to descriptors, including, in this example, personal name, business name, street address, and telephone number. In this example, a search of the entries for telephone number 6193312345 returns the email address xyz@domain.com. Server 23 then substitutes the address xyz@domain.com for
15 the received address of 6193312345@phoneserv.net and sends the message with this address onwards via the Internet to the desired destination.

To further enhance the usefulness of this embodiment of the invention, the software is arranged so that multiple keywords and/or fields can be combined within the descriptor of the address. For example, a database lookup of the
20 descriptor johnsmith may return many matches. To narrow the search, part or whole of his address can be added to the descriptor. For example, if the sender knows that John Smith lives in Centennial Street, Bankstown, he could use the descriptor johnsmith.bankstown or preferably johnsmith.centennial.bankstown. The latter would probably return a unique database match. The database engine
25 of this embodiment of the invention applies well-known software techniques to allow free-form matching of multiple keys within descriptors.

It is envisaged that where possible the telephone number of the addressee would be used as the descriptor. By including the country code and/or area code in the telephone number, such a descriptor is likely to uniquely specify the desired
30 addressee. Furthermore, telephone numbers can be readily ascertained, for example from directory assistance services or telephone directories. Where

several people may be associated with one telephone number, for example several employees of a business or several residents at one home, further qualification can be added to the descriptor. For example, the person's given name or names can be included to form a descriptor such as john.61247515280.

- 5 The database engine can be arranged so that if the search of the database gives returns a unique email address, any further qualification of the descriptor is ignored. In the example of john.61247515280, if 61247515280 returns a unique match, the prepended "john" is ignored.

- 10 In the case where no match is found or multiple matches result in ambiguity, server 23 returns a message to the sender explaining the nature of the problem which may include additional information on some or all of the matches. The sender might then try again using a different or expanded descriptor by for example:

johnsmith61247515280..

- 15 In an alternative in this embodiment of the invention, email client 21 is further adapted to automatically include a predetermined hostname if none is included in the address entered by the author of the email being sent. In other embodiments, server 23 is adapted to accept email addresses which do not include a hostname. These enhancements allow the user to enter only a
20 descriptor, for example just a telephone number, the database then providing the server with the required, relevant information obtained from the database, and the server then converting this to the relevant email address.

- 25 Whereas the signalling connections of the exemplary embodiment of Fig 1 are described as being discrete paths it will be understood that in practice these connections can advantageously be implemented as a network such as the Internet.

For the embodiment of Figure 2, although the database search function in the embodiment of the invention described above is performed at the site of server 23, it will be understood that this function could be provided by a database

server located elsewhere. Furthermore, the database may well, in practice, not be located at one site but be distributed over multiple sites. For example, if server 23 receives an email addressed with a descriptor including the word "japan" a database query could be sent to a suitable database server in Japan. Similarly, if
5 server 23 were to receive an email addressed to a telephone number starting with, for example, "49", it could either send a query to the telephone number database in Germany, or it could forward the whole message to a suitable server in Germany for further handling.

The invention is also applicable to unifixd messaging systems whereby
10 messages sent by one medium may be delivered by another. For example, by using voice-recognition technology, text-to-speech, speech-to-text recognition or keypad operation, a telephone message may be delivered by facsimile, internet or intranet, or by satellite; or an email message sent via the internet may be delivered to a mobile telephone, satellite, pager, facsimile, or the like.

15 It is also envisaged that part or all of the functionality of the invention could be provided by software running at the email sender's site. For example, an email client could be adapted to automatically send a search request to a remote database, substitute a returned email address for a descriptor entered by the author of the email, and then send the email to that address. It is of course also
20 envisaged that part or all of the invention can be implemented as software running at an internet service provider's site.

In an alternative form, the terminal or client (the "terminal") of the sender may recognise that the address of the message being sent is not complete and/or correct. It therefore sends a message (by any suitable means, not necessarily
25 email but including email) to the database server which then searches the database for the complete/correct email address of the intended recipient. If the complete/correct address is not found, the sender's terminal is advised and the sender can make the appropriate decision as to what to do. If the complete/correct address is found it is forwarded to the sender's terminal which then inserts the
30 correct/complete address in the email message and sends the message to the intended recipient. If more than one possible complete/correct address is found,

the sender's terminal is advised and the sender can make the appropriate selection.

This allows for security in that the sender will know that the email message will only be send if there is certainty. It also may allow a manual override in that
5 the decision to send the email message is up to the sender. Furthermore, the text of the message is not being held in the database or search engine during the processing, it is being held at the sender's terminal.

If a number possible complete/correct addresses are found, the selection of one by the sender may cause the selected address to be inserted in the email
10 message "To:" field and for it to be sent.

Also, when the database search/request is sent by the sender's terminal it may specify a degree of certainty (eg. 80%) so that when the database is searched it will select only those possible addresses where the degree of certainty of a correct match is the same as or greater than that specified.

15 The example of Figures 3 and 4 accepts mail in a number of formats, using the mail address provided as keywords to search a database of people and their real email addresses. Various modules of the system run on a number of servers.

The domain name server 31 translates the various names into IP addresses. It also defines the mail servers. The first mail server 32 receives and
20 stores all mail for the system of the present invention. It is programmed to store all mail into a single account.

The mail "client" 34 allows the system of the present invention to take control of the client for such activities as fetching and replying to mail. It is set to fetch mail, for example, every two minutes. When new mail arrives, the client sets
25 a flag in the flag application 35 to show that mail needs to be processed.

The client is set up with multiple mail "accounts", each of which has its own "From:" address. These accounts are used when replying to mail to tag different

categories of mail, so the "From:" address and "Reply To:" address sent in reply can be used to select an appropriate response when a customer replies to them. For example, all messages sent to customers, which ask them to select from a list of possible matches, has the "From:" address of "x%select@invention.com".

- 5 All mail messages are stored in the client, being moved out of the "in" folder into the folder appropriate to the message, eg messages that have no match in the people database 38 are stored in the "no match" folder for future re-matches.

The flag application 35 stores a status flag that mail is ready for processing. This application is separate from the system of the present invention to avoid
10 deadlocks that might occur when the system of the present invention tries to run a script in the mail client 34 while the other is trying to send a message to the find application 36, which contains the intelligence for the system of the present invention. It periodically polls the flag application 35 to see if mail is available. If the flag is set, it processes the mail one by one. The "To:" address of each mail
15 item is used to determine the action required. The flowchart for this is illustrated in Figure 4.

Items with no "To:" address are ignored. Delivery failures messages are returned to the original sender with an advertising message. Selection messages contain "%select@invention.com" in the "To:" address, and these are processed to
20 extract and act on the selection.

Messages that are addressed to other servers are sent on unmodified, except the "return-Path:" is tagged to allow detection of delivery failure.

Other messages are treated as a request for the present invention database lookup function.

- 25 As well as the specified fields in the database, there is another calculated field which is a concatenation of all other fields (except "email") with spaces between them. This is the only field that is actually searched during a lookup. The algorithm for processing the "To:" address of messages to be processed as lookup

requests is as follows:

- Except in the instance of domain name, everything after the "@" or "%" may be ignored.
- Everything other than letters or numbers is interpreted as a word break.
- What remains is the list of keywords.
- A search is performed to find all records which contain any of the keywords.
- Every record found is then examined, and if the combined field for that record contains every keyword, that record is added to the match list.
- If there is more than one match, a selection request is sent.
- If there is no match, a request for more keywords is sent.
- If there is one match, the mail is redirected to the appropriate address.

The database and web server 37 has a built-in web server. The web server allows the administrator to edit the people database 38 and view the mail log 39, with appropriate access security. It also allows customers to add their details via the web, but not to edit them once they are added.

The people database 38 has a script 40 that is run when it is edited, which sets a flag in the application. This causes it to re-search the database for every mail item in its "no match" folder, so that customers can add their details to the database after mail addressed to them is received, and have the mail correctly delivered. Mail items in the "no match" folder may be held there indefinitely, or for a defined period of time.

The people database 38 stores all information about the people. As well as the defined fields, it also has a calculated "combined" field, which is a combination of all fields except the email address. This combined field is used for keyword searches. Some of the fields have input checking: the telephone fields must be
5 numeric only (so that searches based on telephone numbers work) and the email field is mandatory.

It may be necessary to tag the "Reply-To:" address of email messages so that undeliverable mail could be trapped and acted on appropriately. A simple TCP/IP application may be used to send messages.

10 For all embodiments, if the server located an excessive number (which may be a defined number) of potential matches for the complete/connect address it may raise a query with the sender requesting further information on the proposed recipient to enable the number of potential matches to be reduced. For example, if the sender has supplied the keywords "john.smith.richmond" with there being a
15 large number of cities in the world named "Richmond", the number of potential matches would be quite high. Therefore the server could request more information such as, for example, a way of designating which city of Richmond is relevant. This may be by providing country and state details, or by providing the country and/or state and/or distinct telephone codes.

20 To now refer to Figure 5, an additional function may be included in the present invention to enable automatic notification/information to be sent by email to people who may be interested in registering with the system and having the relevant information in the database. The criteria for a person to be sent this notification/information email is based on email messages they have sent to or
25 received from, a person registered to use the present invention and thus whose information is on the database. If, for instance, a particular registered user sends an email to a non-registered user, the system will identify the non-registered user and automatically send an email message to that person informing them of the system and its benefits. Also included in the email message will be mention of the
30 registered user name or at least the email address of the person, who either recently sent them an email message or being a person to whom they recently

sent an email message.

The automatic email message generated will be received shortly after the user receives the original email that triggered its creation.

There are many possible mechanisms for implementing this additional
5 functionality. One method involves additional configuration at the participating
ISP's site, along with an upgrade in functions of the database search engine
server. Figure 5 shows diagrammatically the elements involved in this embodiment
of the present invention. The ISP's SMTP server 42 is configured to forward
undelivered mail to the mail server 43. The server 43 attempts to resolve the
10 correct recipient address through the information contained in the original TO:
address field. If it is successful, the server 43 contacts the recipients ISP (SMTP
server) 46 and forward the email, the recipient 47 typically receives the email via a
connection between his email client and the ISP's POP/IMAP server. The
additional configuration required for the server 42 involves the periodic delivery of
15 an extract of the mail log on the ISP's SMTP server 42 to the mail server 43. The
mail log 44 typically contains detailed information about all mail sent and received
by the mail server 42. An extract of this mail log 44 is generated to include the
destination address and sender address pairs for every email that has passed
through the server since the last time the extract was created (multiple instances
20 of the same pair would be removed). The extract is then sent to the mail server 43
where it is processed. Processing involves querying the database 45 for the
existence of each and every address in the mail log extract. If the address being
queried is not found to exist in the database 45 (signifying an unregistered user),
the system generates a notification/information email for delivery to the
25 unregistered person who had previously received from or sent an email to the
registered user. That notification email outlines the benefits of the system, advise
of the person they have received or sent an email message to or from a registered
user, and invite them to register. To avoid unregistered users repeatedly receiving
information on the system and an invitation to register, the database 45 and query
30 engine may be suitably equipped to determine how many email messages have
been sent to a particular unregistered user, and to cease sending the email

messages when a defined limit is reached. This may be an open ended feature, or one whereby after a prescribed period the unregistered user may again receive information on the system. Also the auto-mailer feature should be optional for each registered user. That is, if a registered user doesn't want the system

5 contacting recipients with the notification email message then the registered user should be able to switch this feature on/off. The information forwarded to the unregistered user may include the name/contact details of the registered user whose email triggered the sending of the information.

The descriptor for any one registered user may be changed by that user

10 from time to time via the worldwide web, email, telephone, mail, or as otherwise allowed.

It will be understood that the invention disclosed and defined in this specification extends to all alternative combinations of two or more of the individual features mentioned or evident from the text or drawings. All of these

15 different combinations constitute various alternative aspects of the invention.

It will also be understood that the term "comprises" (or its grammatical variants) as used in this specification is equivalent to the term "includes" and should not be taken as excluding the presence of other elements or features.

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1 A method of conveying an email message including an address field in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended recipient of the message and which may be different from the account name of
5 the intended recipient, including the steps of locating in a database of descriptors and email addresses the email address associated with said descriptor, and transmitting the message to the email address yielded by the database.

2 A system for handling undeliverable electronic mail, including the steps of receiving an email message including an invalid destination address, searching a
10 database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination address, and if a prescribed threshold of match is exceeded, forwarding said email message to a valid email address retrieved from said database according to the result of said search.

3 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving
15 an email message forwarded by a sender, the email message including an invalid destination address, searching a database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination address, and sending a notification message to the sender of said email message, said notification message advising the sender of the results of said database search.

20 4 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving the email message from its sender, the email message including an address field in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended recipient of the message and which may be different from the account name of the intended recipient, locating in a database of descriptors and email addresses
25 the email address associated with said descriptor, and forwarding the message to the email address yielded by the database.

5 A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the database includes fields corresponding to commonly-used identifiers such as a telephone number, business name, street address, personal name, alias, or nickname.

6 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1, 4 or 5, wherein the descriptor
is selected from a list including a telephone number associated with the intended
recipient, a business name associated with said intended recipient, a personal
name associated with said intended recipient, and a part of a street address
5 associated with the intended recipient.

7 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1, 4 or 5, wherein the descriptor
is a combination of one or more identifying elements associated with the intended
recipient.

8 A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the descriptor includes a
10 concatenation of a name and city.

9 A method as claimed in claim 7 or claim 8, wherein the descriptor includes
a concatenation of name and telephone number.

10 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein there is included
the step of generating and conveying a return email notification to the sender of
15 the email message, which reports the status of the database search and whether
or not the email has been received.

11 A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the return email notification
reports the status of the database search and whether or not the email message
has been received.

20 12 A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the return email notification also
reports when the email message has been received.

13 A method as claimed in claim 10 or claim 11, wherein the return email
notification includes notification of failure to match the descriptor with an email
address.

25 14 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein especially
formatted email messages are interpreted as database queries and not as email

messages to be readdressed and forwarded.

15 A computer equipped with email client software adapted to execute the steps of recognising that an email address of a message being sent does not include a host name and appending a predetermined hostname to the address
5 before sending the email.

16 A method of determining an email address including providing a database where email addresses are linked with descriptors relevant for a person at each email address so that a user can provide one or more of the descriptors enabling a search to be conducted of the database to determine the relevant email
10 address, the descriptors including at least one of given name, surname, address, name of business, and/or telephone number.

17 A method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the database is at the server, or separate.

18 A method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the database is separate from
15 the server.

19 A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein the server is adapted to recognise that the information given in the account name portion of the address was insufficient or not in the correct form for delivery, and passes the necessary message to the operator of the database which locates the correct or complete
20 address, and forwards the message.

20 A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein the operator of the database passes the correct or complete address back to the server to enable it to send the message.

21 A database to enable the method of any one of claims 1 to 14 or claims 16
25 to 20 to be performed, the database having fields for email addresses, and separate fields for each of given name, surname, telephone number, name of business and/or address; at least one of the separate fields being completed for

each email address.

22 An address system to enable users of computer-based telecommunication systems to independently locate an address of a user, the address system including at least one portion which is the numeric characters of a number of a telecommunications device of the user, the at least one portion being that portion which identifies the user.

23 An address system as claimed in claim 22, wherein the number of the telecommunications device includes at least one of the area code within the user's country; the country code of the user's country; or the personal access number within the user's country.

24 An address system as claimed in claim 22 in claim 23, wherein the computer-based telecommunication system is the internet.

25 An address system as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 24, wherein the device may be selected from a list including a telephone, facsimile, pager, mobile telephone and satellite connected technology.

26 An address system as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 25, wherein at least one portion of the descriptor is alpha numeric.

27 An address system as claimed in claim 26, wherein the alpha includes at least a part of a name of the user.

28 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 14 or 16 to 20, wherein there are provided additional steps including determining from the database if either of the sender or recipient are not a registered user, and forwarding to any such unregistered user information on the system and its advantages and/or a request to register.

29 A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein an advice is forwarded to the sender or recipient who is a registered user that the information has been

forwarded to the unregistered user.

- 30 A method as claimed in claim 28 or claim 29, wherein the information included all necessary documents to enable the unregistered user to become registered as a user.
- 5 31 A method as claimed in claim 30, wherein when the unregistered user is registered as a user, a search is conducted to determine if any messages are awaiting forwarding to the user and, if so, to forward to the user any such messages.
- 10 32 A method as claimed in claim 31, wherein when a further advice is sent to the registered user advising the registered user that the unregistered user has become registered.

Figure 1

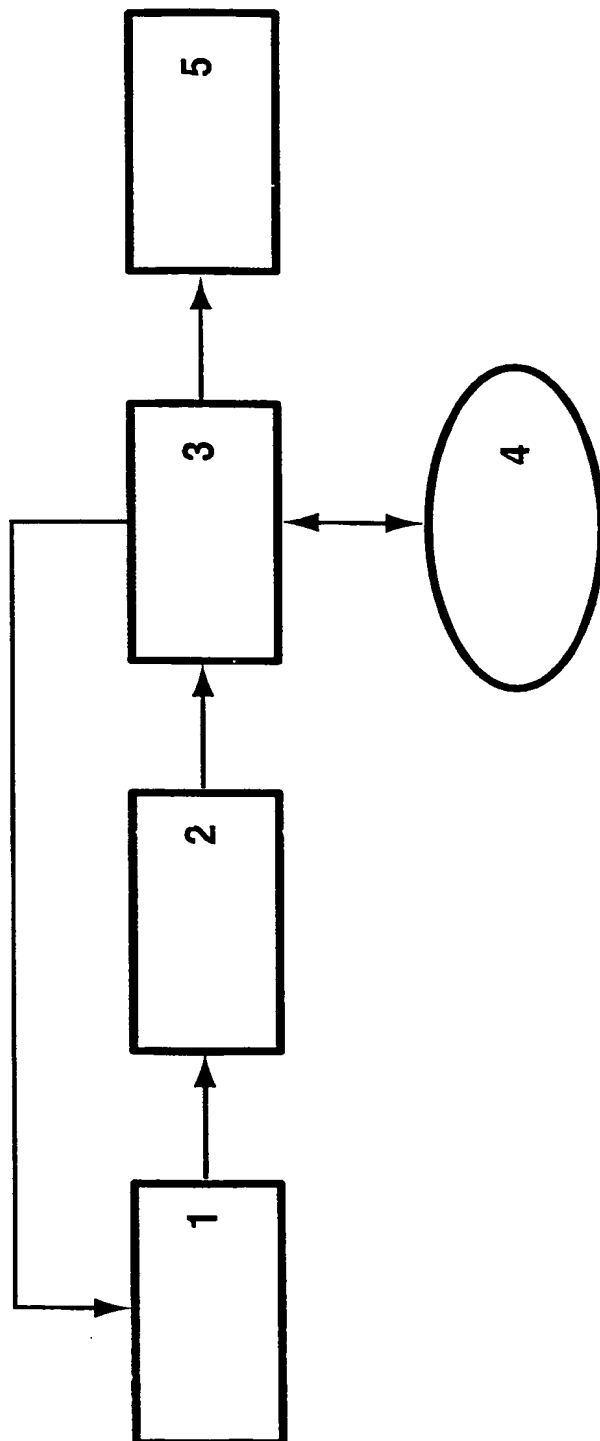
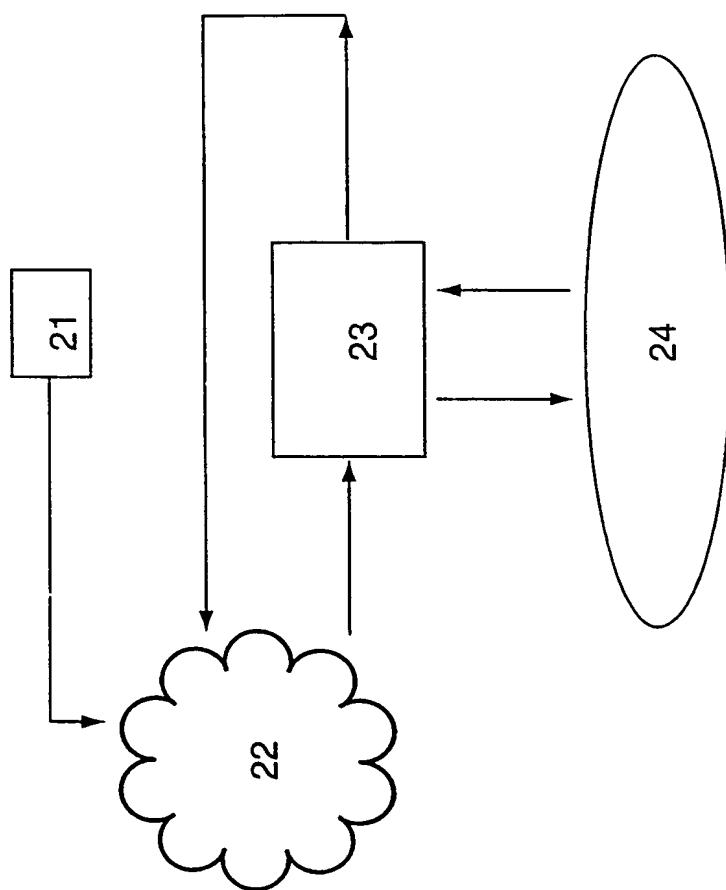


Figure 2



3/5

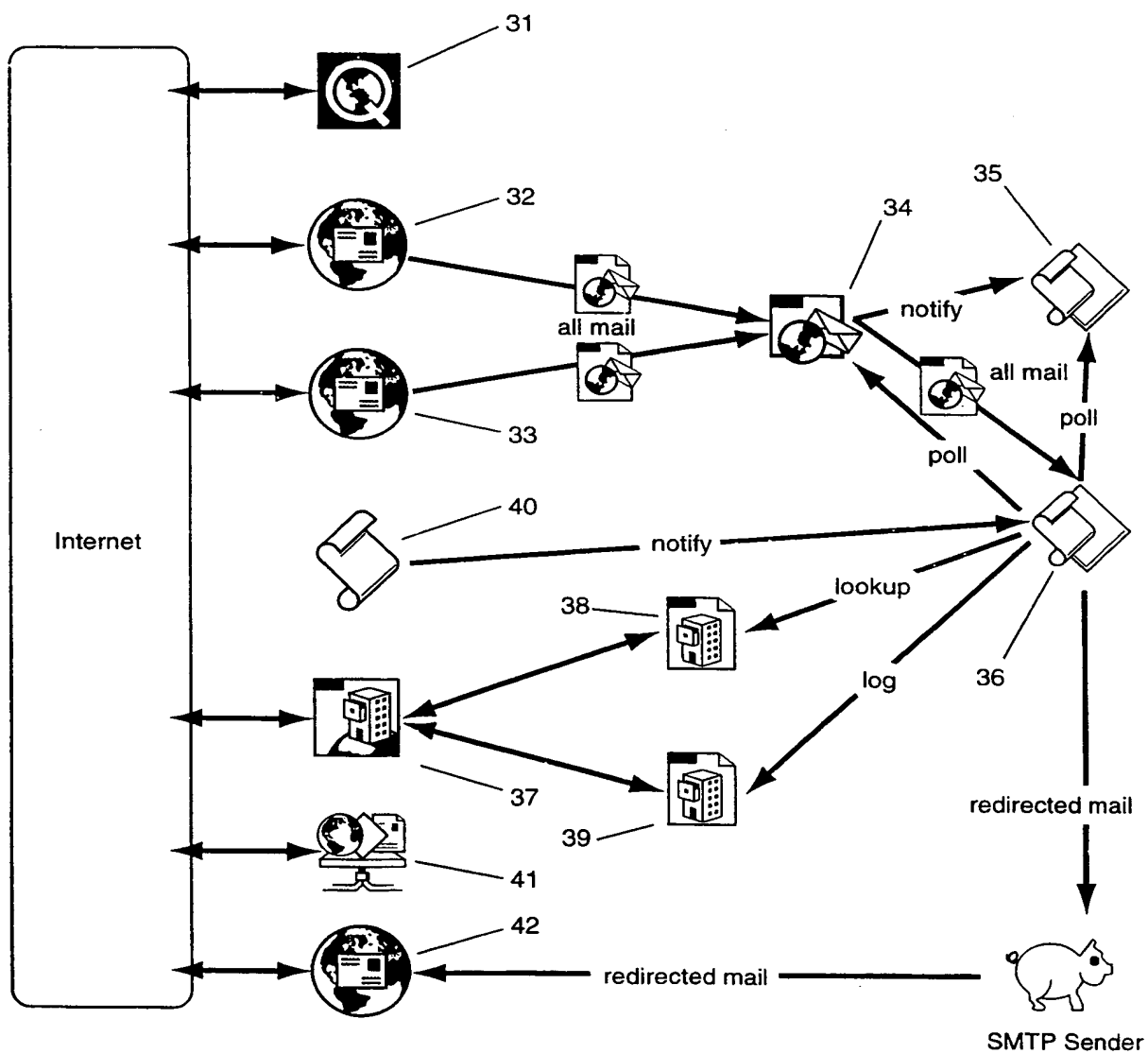


Figure 3

4/5

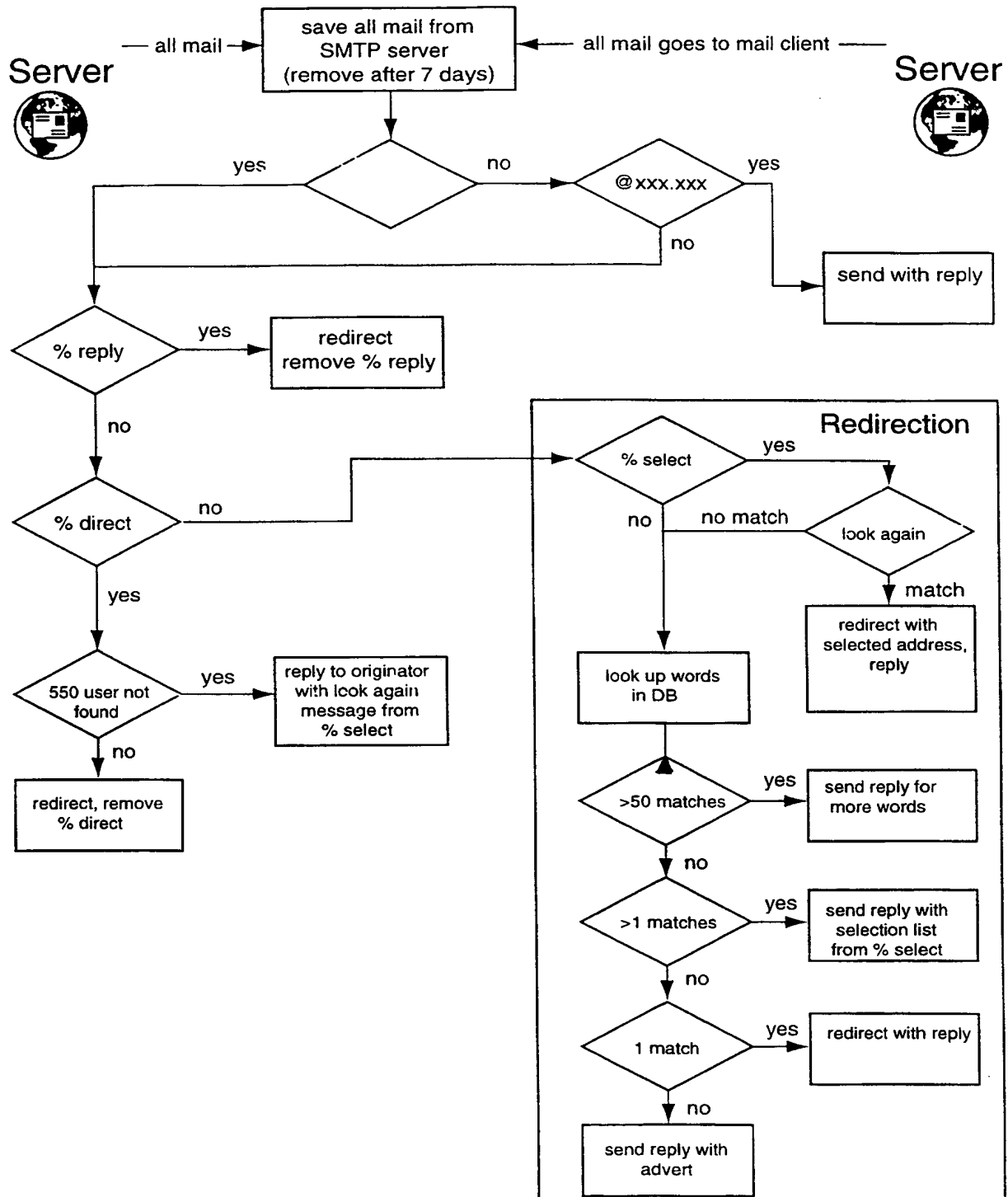


Figure 4

5/5

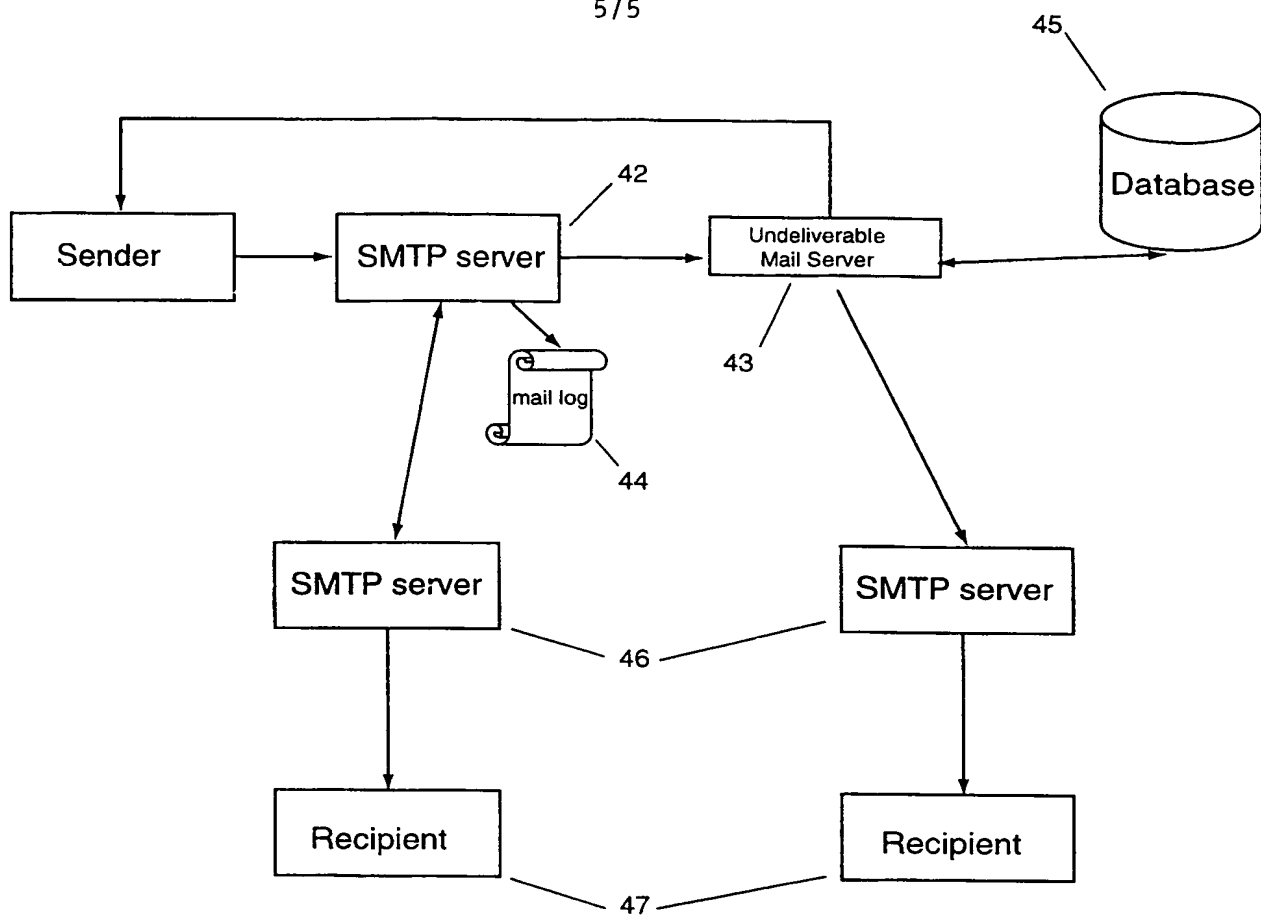


Figure 5

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/AU 99/00079

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER				
Int Cl ⁶ : G06F 17/60, G06F 17/30				
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC				
B. FIELDS SEARCHED				
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) G06F				
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched				
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) WPAT: EMAIL OR (MAIL: AND ALIAS) OR NICK(NAME: OR NICKNAME: OR (ELECTRONIC()MAIL: AND NAME:) OR ((EMAIL OR E()MAIL) and (DIRECTORY OR DATABASE))				
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT				
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.		
X	US,A, 5678045 (BETTELS) 14 October 1997 see whole document	1-32		
X,P	Derwent Abstracts Accession No: 98-256828, Class W01, JP 10-083362 A (HITACHI LTD) 31 March 1998	1		
X	Derwent Abstracts Accession No: 96-245101/25 Class T01, JP 08-097853 A (NEC CORP) 12 April 1996	15		
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex				
<p>* Special categories of cited documents:</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> <p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>"&" document member of the same patent family</p> </td> </tr> </table>			<p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p>	<p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>"&" document member of the same patent family</p>
<p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p>	<p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>"&" document member of the same patent family</p>			
Date of the actual completion of the international search 18 March 1999		Date of mailing of the international search report - 1 APR 1999		
Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200 WODEN ACT 2606 AUSTRALIA Facsimile No.: (02) 6285 3929		Authorized officer S LEE Telephone No.: (02) 6283 2205		

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU 99/00079

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a)

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

- (a) Claims 1-14, 16-21, 28-32 where a database is accessed for the email address
 - (b) Claim 15 where an email host extension is added
 - (c) Claims 22-27 with numeric characters identify the user.
1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims
 2. ☒ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
 3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
 4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FREEHILLS
PATENT ATTORNEYS
PATENTS TRADE MARKS DESIGNS

12 October 1999

Our ref KWC: 40124386
Phone 03 9288 1841
Doc no MELCD\99284001.6

The Commissioner of Patents
IP Australia
C/- Melbourne Sub-Office
Level 6, 565 Bourke Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Sir

A Pty Ltd
International Patent application no. PCT/AU99/00079
System for handling electronic mail

We refer to the examiner's first written opinion on this application and note the examiner has raised citations US5678045 and JP08-097853. These will be separately considered.

US Patent 5678045 of Bettels

This US patent is directed to database entries whereby information about an individual can be determined. In accordance with the summary of the invention:

"A mechanism is provided for systematically creating synonym names in a Directory Information Tree (DIT), where the synonym names are expressed in scripts other than that in which the original entries were created. This is done by generating an alternative name as an attribute of a primary entry object, and then generating an alias object including that alternative name, with the alias object including a pointer to the primary object. When a look-up or search operation is executed using the alias, the pointer leads to the primary object and all attributes may thereby be directly accessed and returned to the user. The primary object is also provided with a pointer back to the alias, of which there may be several. If the primary object is to be deleted, each alias is first sorted via the pointer(s), and is deleted. The pointer from the primary object to the alias object can be achieved by making the alias object a child of the primary object."

Its basic purpose is to enable users of an international database system to be able to obtain attributes of a person (such as their telephone number) without having to resort to the Latin-script version of a person's name. If a person is of Japanese origin they might wish to use the Kanji, Katakana or Hiragana versions of Japanese script for their name. Under the X.500 protocol, this is not possible. The invention described and claimed allows the person's name in any of those Japanese script forms to be added as an alias at the appropriate place in the Directory Information Tree. Similarly for the organisation name for a Japanese company. This applies to other languages such as, for example, both Mandarin and Cantonese in Chinese; Hebrew; Arabic; and the like. All use different script forms which are not included within the ambit of standard directory protocols. In all aspects it is still the name of the person, only the characters in which it is written which change.

As such, patent 5678045 is directed to a different task, and for a totally different purpose, to the invention of the present application. It is not included within the scope of any of the claims of the International Application, and therefore does not anticipate any of those claims. Therefore, it has no effect upon the validity nor the scope of the claims of the International Application.

Japanese patent 8-97853 published 12 April 1996 in the name of Nippon Electric Corporation.

From a fair reading of the specification it is believed that the system described is intended to be used in an intranet. The examples given, and the embodiments described, all relate to information and transmissions which would not be appropriate to an Internet scenario. For example, when defining a group of persons to whom an email message is to be sent, they define that group as by such characteristics as sex and age, or by those who are currently using a computer. If such characteristics were used on an Internet basis (particularly world wide) the number of email transmissions would, no doubt, overload even the most powerful email server.

The basic operation of this system is designed to enable an email message to be sent to those within a group. As mentioned above, the group can be defined by, for example, sex and age, and work location (eg administration). It also enables a group to be defined by also including the qualification "and who are presently using their computer". This is achieved by having a status check conducted of each of the members of the defined group prior to the addresses being used for the transmission of the email.

Therefore, when a user creates an email message and defines the group to whom it is being sent, the system automatically refers to that group and will create a list of email addresses to whom the email is to be sent. It then determines the state of those addresses. If they are within the appropriate state, the list is forwarded and the email message are created by the addition of the varying addresses. They are sent to those addresses to whom it is intended.

In this way, when the message is sent, the sender can easily generate the destination addresses which match the state of the intended recipients in relation to the use of the computer, and selectively send the email message. It is therefore a method of determining those who belong to a group specified by the sender and

enabling the message to be sent to those intended to receive it, and no other person.

A translation of the full text of the specification has been obtained and for the information of the examiner we *attach* a copy.

New claims have been prepared as it is believed that there is a possibility that existing claims 1, 4, 15 & 16 may have been anticipated by the Japanese reference. Claim 21, with certain appendices and some of the alternatives, may include within its scope the Japanese specification. The revised claims have been prepared with this in mind and, we believe, overcome both citations.

The examiner will note in the claims that there must be a prescribed threshold of match. This concept is not disclosed in either of the citations.

Furthermore, a fair reading of both of citations makes it clear that they are both directed at an intranet rather than an internet based email system. With an intranet, one is dealing with a very small number of people and possible addresses and, therefore, the management of the system is quite easy. When dealing with a global email system and the billions of possible email addresses, the task is somewhat more difficult.

We look forward to receipt of a favourable international preliminary examination report in due course.

Yours faithfully



Keith Callinan

Enc

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

- 1 A method of conveying an email message including an address field in
which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended
recipient of the message and which is different from the account name of the
5 intended recipient, including the steps of searching in a database of descriptors
and email addresses for the email address associated with said descriptor and, if
an email address is located which and where a prescribed threshold of match is
exceeded, transmitting the message to the email address yielded by the database;
the descriptor being a combination of one or more identifying elements associated
10 with the intended recipient.
- 2 A system for handling undeliverable electronic mail, including the steps of
receiving an email message including an invalid destination address, searching a
database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination
address, and if a prescribed threshold of match is exceeded, forwarding said email
15 message to a valid email address retrieved from said database according to the
result of said search.
- 3 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving
an email message forwarded by a sender, the email message including an invalid
destination address, searching a database for records partially or completely
20 matching parts of said destination address, and sending a notification message to
the sender of said email message, said notification message advising the sender
of the results of said database search.
- 4 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving
the email message from its sender, the email message including an address field
25 in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended
recipient of the message and which is different from the account name of the
intended recipient, locating in a database of descriptors and email addresses the
email address associated with said descriptor, and forwarding the message to the
email address yielded by the database; the descriptor being a combination of one
30 or more identifying elements associated with the intended recipient.

messages to be readdressed and forwarded.

14 A method of determining an email address including providing a database where email addresses are linked with descriptors relevant for a person at each email address so that a user can provide one or more of the descriptors enabling
5 a search to be conducted of the database to determine the relevant email address, the descriptors including at least one of given name, surname, address, name of business, and/or telephone number; the server being adapted to recognise that the information given in the account name portion of the address was insufficient or not in the correct form for delivery, and passes the necessary
10 message to the operator of the database which locates the correct or complete address, and forwards the message.

15 A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the database is at the server.

16 A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the database is separate from the server.

15 17 A method as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 16, wherein the operator of the database passes the correct or complete address back to the server to enable it to send the message.

18 A database to enable the method of any one of claims 1 to 17 to be performed, the database having fields for email addresses, and separate fields for
20 each of given name, surname, telephone number, name of business and/or address; at least one of the separate fields being completed for each email address.

19 An address system to enable users of computer-based telecommunication systems to independently locate an address of a user, the address system
25 including at least one portion which is the numeric characters of a number of a telecommunications device of the user, the at least one portion being that portion which identifies the user.

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The Commissioner of Patents
IP Australia
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565 Bourke Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Acting as the International Preliminary Examining Authority

Dear Commissioner

A Pty Ltd
International Patent Application No. PCT/AU99/00079
"System for handling electronic mail"

We refer to the telephone call of this day from the examiner Mr Stephen Lee and enclose reprinted claims pages 20 to 24 to replace those forwarded to you with our response and which contain printing errors.

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Keith Callinan

Enc

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

- 1 A method of conveying an email message including an address field in
which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended
recipient of the message and which is different from the account name of the
5 intended recipient, including the steps of searching in a database of descriptors
and email addresses for the email address associated with said descriptor and, if
an email address is located which and where a prescribed threshold of match is
exceeded, transmitting the message to the email address yielded by the database;
the descriptor being a combination of one or more identifying elements associated
10 with the intended recipient.
- 2 A system for handling undeliverable electronic mail, including the steps of
receiving an email message including an invalid destination address, searching a
database for records partially or completely matching parts of said destination
address, and if a prescribed threshold of match is exceeded, forwarding said email
15 message to a valid email address retrieved from said database according to the
result of said search.
- 3 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving
an email message forwarded by a sender, the email message including an invalid
destination address, searching a database for records partially or completely
20 matching parts of said destination address, and sending a notification message to
the sender of said email message, said notification message advising the sender
of the results of said database search.
- 4 A method of conveying an email message including the steps of receiving
the email message from its sender, the email message including an address field
25 in which an account name portion of the address is a descriptor of the intended
recipient of the message and which is different from the account name of the
intended recipient, locating in a database of descriptors and email addresses the
email address associated with said descriptor, and forwarding the message to the
email address yielded by the database; the descriptor being a combination of one
30 or more identifying elements associated with the intended recipient.

5 A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the database includes fields corresponding to commonly-used identifiers such as a telephone number, business name, street address, personal name, alias, or nickname.

6 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1, 4 or 5, wherein the descriptor
5 is selected from a list including a telephone number associated with the intended recipient, a business name associated with said intended recipient, a personal name associated with said intended recipient, and a part of a street address associated with the intended recipient.

7 A method as claimed in claim 1 or any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the
10 descriptor includes a concatenation of a name and city.

8 A method as claimed in claim 1 or any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the descriptor includes a concatenation of name and telephone number.

9 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein there is included the step of generating and conveying a return email notification to the sender of
15 the email message, which reports the status of the database search and whether or not the email has been received.

10 A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the return email notification reports the status of the database search and whether or not the email message has been received.

20 11 A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the return email notification also reports when the email message has been received.

12 A method as claimed in claim 9 or claim 10, wherein the return email notification includes notification of failure to match the descriptor with an email address.

25 13 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein especially formatted email messages are interpreted as database queries and not as email

messages to be readdressed and forwarded.

14 A method of determining an email address including providing a database where email addresses are linked with descriptors relevant for a person at each email address so that a user can provide one or more of the descriptors enabling
5 a search to be conducted of the database to determine the relevant email address, the descriptors including at least one of given name, surname, address, name of business, and/or telephone number; the server being adapted to recognise that the information given in the account name portion of the address was insufficient or not in the correct form for delivery, and passes the necessary
10 message to the operator of the database which locates the correct or complete address, and forwards the message.

15 A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the database is at the server.

16 A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the database is separate from the server.

15 17 A method as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 16, wherein the operator of the database passes the correct or complete address back to the server to enable it to send the message.

18 A database to enable the method of any one of claims 1 to 17 to be performed, the database having fields for email addresses, and separate fields for
20 each of given name, surname, telephone number, name of business and/or address; at least one of the separate fields being completed for each email address.

19 An address system to enable users of computer-based telecommunication systems to independently locate an address of a user, the address system
25 including at least one portion which is the numeric characters of a number of a telecommunications device of the user, the at least one portion being that portion which identifies the user.

- 20 An address system as claimed in claim 19, wherein the number of the telecommunications device includes at least one of the area code within the user's country; the country code of the user's country; or the personal access number within the user's country.
- 5 21 An address system as claimed in claim 19 or claim 20, wherein the computer-based telecommunication system is the internet.
- 22 An address system as claimed in any one of claims 19 to 21, wherein the device may be selected from a list including a telephone, facsimile, pager, mobile telephone and satellite connected technology.
- 10 23 An address system as claimed in any one of claims 19 to 22, wherein at least one portion of the descriptor is alpha numeric.
- 24 An address system as claimed in claim 23, wherein the alpha includes at least a part of a name of the user.
- 15 25 A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein there are provided additional steps including determining from the database if either of the sender or recipient are not a registered user, and forwarding to any such unregistered user information on the system and its advantages and/or a request to register.
- 20 26 A method as claimed in claim 25, wherein an advice is forwarded to the sender or recipient who is a registered user that the information has been forwarded to the unregistered user.
- 27 A method as claimed in claim 25 or claim 26, wherein the information included all necessary documents to enable the unregistered user to become registered as a user.
- 25 28 A method as claimed in claim 27, wherein when the unregistered user is registered as a user, a search is conducted to determine if any messages are

awaiting forwarding to the user and, if so, to forward to the user any such messages.

29 A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein when a further advice is sent to
the registered user advising the registered user that the unregistered user has
5 become registered.